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A QUESTION OF SPACE.

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To the popular mind, space is a void; but exegetically, it may be full of significance.

In the American Appendix to the Revised Version, the note occurs at Isa. 14: 23, "Omit the space after this verse." On turning to the body of the Revision, we find that the space in question serves to separate the prophecy against Babylon, 13: 1—14: 23 from that against "the Assyrian," 14: 24—27. If these are indeed separate prophecies, the Revision is right; if they belong together, the Appendix is right.

The former view does not stand or fall with the exilic origin of 14: 1—23; for all agree that the space which *follows* 14: 27 separates two prophecies which differ only in subject, both being conceded to Isaiah. Hence the question of authorship is not necessarily involved.

Whatever explanation is to be adopted, the matter was not regarded by the Revisers as one of slight consequence; for a multitude of minor differences between the two Committees were adjusted by mutual concessions; the Appendix presents only those suggestions which the Americans decided to insist upon.

A glance at the history of opinion will be instructive here, as often. The apparent contrast in subject between verses 24—27 and the previous part of the chapter was perceived by Vitringa, (to go no farther back). In his masterly Commentary (1714) which would repay much more through study than at present it usually receives, he treats the four verses in question as a postscript, annexed directly to the previous prophecy against Babylon, in order to give credence to it by instancing an event soon to take place; viz., the destruction of Sennacherib, see verse 25. He has no question as to the Isaian authorship of the whole.

Clericus (1731), while sharing the same conviction as to the authorship of the chapters, and as to the future reference of

the oracle against Babylon, has the following note on 14: 24: "It is a new prophecy against the Assyrian, and one that was fulfilled much sooner than the former." Hence he begins a paragraph with verse 24.

A third view was expressed by Lowth (1778), namely, that the brief prophecy against Assyria is an integral part of that against Babylon, the whole apparently relating to the destruction by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus. He concedes that 14: 24-27 may refer to the overthrow of Sennacherib's army, but adds that it may have a further fulfillment.

We enter a new atmosphere with the modern rationalists, of whom Rosenmüller (1811) may stand as an early example. According to this fourth view, the so-called book of Isaiah is a collection of many oracles composed by different prophets at wide intervals of time. The prophecy against Babylon was impossible before the exile; it therefore belongs to the sixth century. The prophecy against Assyria, 14: 24-27, belongs to Hezekiah's time, being a fragment of a larger oracle on the same subject. This general view is held by nearly all the later German critics from Gesenius (1821) to Dillmann (1890).

But it is also true that all four of these theories have been maintained down to our own time, as I will show by adducing a familiar example of each.

The only important American commentator, Alexander (1846; work revised 1865), agrees in the main with Vitringa, and so comes under class (1). On 14: 24 he observes: "From the distant view of the destruction of Babylon, the prophet suddenly reverts to that of the Assyrian host, either for the purpose of making one of these events accredit the prediction of the other, or for the purpose of assuring true believers that while God had decreed the deliverance of his people from remoter dangers, he would also protect them from those near at hand."

Orelli (1887) belongs in class (2), as he defends the Isaian authorship of 13: 1-14: 23, but makes a new section there-after saying: "14: 24-27 plainly formed an epilogue to a collection of Isaianic prophecies published in the Assyrian period, and containing oracles of the fall of this power before

Jerusalem, as well as similar ones against other heathen nations." He believes that the oracle against Babylon once held the last place, but was afterwards put first, on account of the importance of Babylon.

Kay in the Bible Commentary (1875) has the same general view as Lowth (class 3): "Conspicuous above all is Asshur-Babel, which after fourteen centuries of comparative quiet was now reviving the idea of universal empire. Isaiah prophesies with the utmost distinctness (14: 24-27) that Asshur should be broken and trodden under foot in the Holy Land; and it is certain that Assyria never recovered from the blow it sustained in the defeat of Sennacherib's army. But this was not all. He looked yet farther into the future, and saw the doom of Babylon, the city which had never ceased to be the real centre of the empire."

These positions are directly traversed by the fourth class above mentioned, which includes not only most of the German critics, but such English scholars as Cheyne, Davidson, Driver, G. A. Smith, and Robertson Smith. The most recent example is Driver (Introduction, 1891) who holds to the exilic authorship of the prophecy against Babylon, and remarks on 14: 24-27; "The date is no doubt during the period of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701. The prophecy has no connection with what precedes."

Reviewing these four theories, it is plain that (2) and (4) favor the Revision, (1) and (3) the American Appendix.

The balance of recent opinion inclines decidedly to the fourth view, and hence it seems astonishing that the eminent scholars upon the American Committee should plant themselves squarely against it. Their note indicates two judgments; first, that Isaiah wrote the prophecy against Babylon; second, that the postscript against the Assyrian is an integral part of the same discourse.

On this, as on so many other points, it would be interesting to know the reasons which decided them; but the very fact that the subjects of such curious interest are so numerous will probably prevent any authoritative statement. It is not necessary to believe, however, that the Appendix is committed to what might be called (by a familiar analogy) the mechanical in opposition to the dynamical view of prophecy;

for the four theories we have noticed do not exhaust the possibilities of the case.

There is a fifth view, which I present in some detail, because, although familiar to special students, it has not, I think, been set before the general public with the fullness and fairness which it merits. It is found in the work of Sir Edward Strachey: "Jewish History and Politics in the Times of Sargon and Sennacherib" (1874; first ed. 1853, under the title, "Hebrew Politics" etc.) Perhaps the book would have become more widely known, if its leading title had been what is now its sub-title: "An Inquiry into the Historical Meaning and Purpose of the Prophecies of Isaiah." At all events, the work is a thorough and thoughtful commentary on all the prophecies of the book of Isaiah, combining the historical and the scientific methods of investigation, and so far from being wedded to traditional ideas that the miraculous element in prophecy is everywhere minimized. On the point before us, Strachey agrees with Lowth and Kay as to the unity of the Assyrian-Babylonian empire, but completely reverses their position by making the Assyria of Isaiah's time, not the Babylon which Cyrus conquered, the objective point of the prophecy. We are not concerned, he thinks, with the literal fulfilment of particulars; what Isaiah saw in vision was the great world-power which threatened Jehovah's land brought low by successive strokes—her armies overthrown upon Jehovah's mountains, her great city sacked and destroyed. However strange the fact may be, it is a fact, that Isaiah never mentions Nineveh in his prophecies. The same is true of his contemporary Micah, who predicts the exile to Babylon (4: 10). Isaiah in an admittedly genuine prophecy (11: 11) foretells a restoration of his people from Shinar. Sept. *Babulonia*. It may be inferred that Sargon carried Israelite captives to Babylon from the fact that he colonized Babylonians in Samaria (2 Kings 17: 24). The same treatment may have been frequent with the prisoners of both the northern and southern kingdoms, thus making Isa. 14: 1-4 natural and appropriate.

Babylon, as Lenormant shows, was of great importance during the Assyrian supremacy. "It had apparently," says Strachey, "an importance something like that of Pasargadæ

after Cyrus had made Ecbatana his capital, or Ecbatana when Darius resided at Susa; of Delhi during the reigns of those Mogul emperors who lived at Agra, or of York in the days of our forefathers, and of Edinburgh and Dublin in our own time; and it was, in truth, as its earlier and later history shows, the more permanent of the two centres of the great Mesopotamian empires."

It is noted in this connection that the captivity which Isaiah foretold in 39: 6 was to Babylon, not Nineveh; that the conquest of the land of Immanuel by the Assyrian (8: 7, 8 cf. 7: 20) is an overflow of the Euphrates, not the Tigris, and that Babylon's overthrow is predicted in 21: 1-10, and in chaps. 40-66. The "Medes" and the "Chaldees," it is shown, were clearly within Isaiah's horizon.

If it be asked whether even thus the king of Assyria could be called "king of Babylon" (14: 4), Strachey replies that Tiglath-Pileser calls himself by a title equivalent to king of Babylon; that Brandis calls Sargon "the ruler of the double kingdom of Nineveh and Babylon," and that Sargon styles himself "the great king, the king of Assyria, and the lord paramount (or the high priest) of Babylon," as kings both before and after him did. Also that this same Sargon wrested Babylon from Merodach-Baladan, and reigned there in his own or his son's name till near his death, receiving there the tribute of various kings; while Sennacherib his successor had to reconquer Babylon once and again before he was secure in its possession.

The capture of Babylon by Sargon may serve as the initiatory fulfilment of the prophecy in the book of Isaiah, as well as its capture by Cyrus; for even on the traditional theory, the fulfilment must be spread over hundreds of years in order to match the predicted desolation.

This whole theory is presented with modesty by Strachey, who awaits the verdict of the Assyrian Inscriptions, when their evidence shall be fuller; who also gives credit to Grotius for the first suggestions of this line of argument, and mentions the fact that Maurice and Stanley have favored his interpretation of the data. Some points in this argument have been confirmed by later researches. Thus the reference of Strachey to Isa. 21: 1-10 was addressed somewhat apolo-

getically "to those who are content to take the text as it is."

But at present, the Isaian authorship of that passage is held even by many who believe in the exilic origin of other disputed chapters. Again, the captivity in Babylon of multitudes of Isaiah's countrymen in his own time, illustrating 14: 1-4, is made probable by the customs of the Assyrian kings; see Schrader, K A T. English trans., 2: 77 ff. cf. 1: 268 ff.

In presenting this theory, however, I must not be understood as converted to it. There is much to be said in opposition; see e. g. Cheyne's commentary *in loco*. The opposition comes from conservative as well as radical critics. I quote the following from Geo. Rawlinson in the Pulpit Commentary on Isa. 13: 1 sq. He is controverting the view of Dr. Kay, which in this particular agrees with Strachey's: "Neither Isaiah nor any other sacred writer knows of an Assyro-Babylonian kingdom or empire. Assyria and Babylonia are distinct kingdoms in Genesis (10: 8-12), in 2 Kings (18-20), in 2 Chronicles (32), in Isaiah (36-39), and in Ezekiel (23, 30 and 31). They had been at war almost continuously for above seven centuries before the time of Isaiah. Assyria had, on the whole, proved the stronger of the two, and had from time to time, for a longer or a shorter period, held Babylonia in subjection. But the two countries were never more one than Russia and Poland, and, until Tiglath-Pileser assumed the crown of Babylon in 729 B. C., they had always been under separate monarchs."

Dr. Rawlinson ought to be good authority on a question of Oriental history, but he may not fully appreciate the bearing of this last concession, which shows (in connection with similar facts in the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib) that *precisely in Isaiah's time* the king of Assyria held also the crown of Babylon.

To sum up: we must not be in haste to decide the question before us. Probably other pertinent facts are yet to be discovered, which will either fill up, or justify, the "space" at Isa. 14: 23. We may gain already a new appreciation of the delicate and intricate nature of the problems with which biblical exegesis is concerned.